

SCHOOL BUSES AND SAFETY

Every year, school buses safely transport millions of children while travelling billions of miles. School bus transportation is one of the safest forms of transportation in the United States (see box).

◆ School buses are engineered and built expressly to protect their young riders.

School buses must meet a wide range of safety standards, including standards for protecting their passengers.

Large school buses (those over 10,000 pounds gross vehicle weight) have built-in safety protection for their young riders. Seats are designed and padded to create a protective envelope to protect school-age kids. These strong, closely-spaced seats and flexible, energy-absorbing seat backs protect passengers without requiring the passengers to do anything but sit in the seats.

Small school buses (those under 10,000 pounds gross vehicle weight) are equipped with lap belts, since their sizes and weights are closer to those of passenger cars and trucks.

Children (ages 5-18) killed in crashes by vehicle type:

Passenger cars	3,113
Light Trucks and Vans	1,425
Pedestrians	573
Bicyclists	264
Motorcyclists	134
TOTAL	5,509

Fatally injured school bus passengers (of all ages) 3

(1998 data)

Features such as emergency exits, roof structure, fuel systems, and body joint strength make school buses stronger, larger, heavier, and safer than other vehicles on the road today.

And experience shows that school buses are protecting their passengers. For example, in 1998, 5,509 children ages 5-18 died in crashes as occupants of passenger cars, light trucks and vans, motorcycles, bikes and as pedestrians. That same year, three passengers died while riding in a school bus.

◆ Different vehicles need different safety systems.

A vehicle must meet safety standards that are appropriate for its size and type because different types of vehicles perform differently in crashes. For example, because a large school bus is heavier than most other vehicles, its weight can protect its occupants from crash forces better than a light vehicle such as a passenger car. The passive protection engineered into large school buses, combined with other factors such as weight, provides passenger protection similar to that provided by safety devices in passenger cars. Both types of vehicles protect children from harm but in different ways.



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